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THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT
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ART

The haphazard gift of sensibility

By Quentin Bell

 FRANCES SPALDING:
 Roger Fry
 Art and Life
 320pp. Granada. £9.95.
 0 236 40178 5

"He became", wrote Kenneth Clark, "incomparably the greatest influence on taste since Ruskin", and this is surely undeniable. He was a major figure, perhaps the major figure, in that group of friends which people call Bloomsbury—and Bloomsbury has not been neglected during the past fifty years or so. Nevertheless, apart from Deryn Sutton's introduction to his letters (published in 1972) there has been no monograph on Roger Fry since Virginia Woolf's biography was published in 1940. Meanwhile a great deal of new information has become available and a great deal that could not be said forty years ago has become common knowledge. A new Life of Roger Fry was badly needed, all the more so because Fry was and for long was a controversial figure; it remained a controversial figure; it was usual to condemn Bloomsbury as a sect, but Roger has been singled out for abuse. For all these reasons and some others Frances Spalding's book is very welcome.

It was in an unlucky hour that Virginia Woolf was persuaded to write a full-length biography. There had been an alternative plan which would have allowed various friends to contribute chapters dealing with different aspects of his many-sided career, and if this plan had been adopted she might have confined herself to a personal study in which she would have left us a record of his charm as a friend and as a lover, his follies and absurdities, his intellectual humility and sincerity. Instead of this she had to write at length without a deep knowledge of painting and art history, and what was worse she had to omit the great emotional crisis of Fry's life—his affair with Vanessa

Bell. She wrote with Fry's sisters breathing down her neck and I think with a natural reticence of her own.

The result is an uneasy book in which one feels that the authoress has ventured into an unfamiliar territory, a place too where all the most promising avenues were marked "Private No Entry". Even without these disadvantages the subject would have been ill suited to her pen, as she herself said when writing about Sickert: "Our biographers are tripped up by these miserable impediments called facts." She might write magnificently but she was still horribly encumbered by these unavoidable obstacles.

Dr Spalding, it must be allowed, does not write magnificently but she rejoices in facts; she pursues them with admirable rapacity and, better still, she knows what to do with them when she has got them; moreover she is a reputable art historian and she knows this particular field of art history very well indeed. She profits by the general liberty of our age which permits us to speak of that which at one time had to remain unsaid. Also, she is young enough to be able to look at old feuds and squabbles from a distance and indeed from an eminence. The complex stories of Roger Fry and Oxline Morrell and of the break with Wyndham Lewis are observed and, as it seems to me, fairly and impartially described.

It is instructive to compare a passage of Virginia Woolf's book with that under review: it concerns Roger Fry's youthful affair with Mrs. Widdington and her daughter. In the 1930s too many people were still refer to the business in a few allusive sentences. These do not reveal the names of the ladies or their relationship, but one is so beautifully descriptive that Dr. Spalding very wisely makes use of it. Mrs. Woolf arouses an interest which could not then be satisfied. Now it can; Dr. Spalding provides the information

that was lacking, and it is in fact extremely interesting. Here, then, the facts, far from being an impediment, enrich and expand our knowledge.

From the outset Dr Spalding insists that "the most central lesson behind Roger Fry's career is that art is democratic in the experience and illuminating". Fry became an undergraduate at Cambridge in 1905, already knowing the philosopher McTaggart and soon to be intimate with Ashbee, Lowes Dickinson and a generation of students gave them a social standing and a distinctive cachet. This showed me that we had all along been labouring under a mutual misunderstanding, i.e. that we had been to the Italian Primitives for quite different reasons. It was felt that one could only appreciate Amico di Sandro when one had acquired a certain considerable mass of erudition and given a great deal of time and attention, but to admire a Matisse required only a certain sensibility. One could feel fairly sure that one's maid could not rival one in the former case, but might by a mere haphazard gift of Providence surpass one in the second. So that the accusation of revolutionary anarchism was due to a social rather than an aesthetic prejudice. The "haphazard gift of Providence" is strangely reminiscent of the Quaker belief in "the true light" in "every man". Potentially, at all events, aesthetic grace is universal and there is no elect. It is a view which, today, will not be generally acceptable. Today we are all, or at least we all want to be, art historians and we like to suppose that art history has something to do with the development of taste. Moreover art history leads us naturally to iconology. We look for the programme in the work of art and this in its turn leads us to hunt for extrinsic information; the content,

he very much surprised if a stake were set up tomorrow for Mr. Roger Fry in the courtyard of Burlington House". It was typical of Fry that he was not so much annoyed as puzzled by the chorus of abuse people who had previously been among his most eager listeners.

I now see that my crime had been to strike at the vested emotional interests. These people felt instinctively that their special culture was one of their social assets. That to be able to speak glibly of Turgot and Matisse, of Amico di Sandro and Baldovinetti, gave them a social standing and a distinctive cachet. This showed me that we had all along been labouring under a mutual misunderstanding, i.e. that we had been to the Italian Primitives for quite different reasons. It was felt that one could only appreciate Amico di Sandro when one had acquired a certain considerable mass of erudition and given a great deal of time and attention, but to admire a Matisse required only a certain sensibility. One could feel fairly sure that one's maid could not rival one in the former case, but might by a mere haphazard gift of Providence surpass one in the second. So that the accusation of revolutionary anarchism was due to a social rather than an aesthetic prejudice.

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preferably the hidden content of the work of art becomes all important. Inevitably the housemaid must be sent back where she belongs. This tendency shows itself in the pronouncements of a certain kind of lecturer who is adept at spinning theories about the esoteric content of works of art and who of necessity addresses us, the ignorant masses, from a high seat of oration. Where we feel that we ourselves joined with the lecturer in discovering the beauties of a painting and that the world of art did indeed belong to all of us, there are among our contemporaries too many who succeed only in persuading us that they are enormously clever and that our simple taste for formal excellence is indeed shallow if not worthless.

From another point of view it is hard not to admit that in truth the mistress was much more likely to enjoy Matisse than was her maid. It might not be at first, at all events, but a very genuine taste and it might derive mainly from the fact that Matisse had become the fashion; nevertheless it is a fact that novelty in art, although it may at first frighten the social élite, ends by becoming socially acceptable. Indeed, in another context Fry concedes this point.

Nevertheless there is evidence enough to make us wonder whether Fry's insistence upon the democratic experience has received the attention it deserves. Dr Spalding, in a notable passage, describes Marlon Richardson's meeting with Fry at the time when she had been refused an inspectorship by the Board of Education. And she describes Fry's pleasure at the results of her teaching, or rather of her lack of teaching; his exhibition of her pupils' work at the Omega workshops; and his efforts to persuade H. A. L. Fisher, then the Minister of Education, to allow her to set up a school. One can well understand his failure if he told Fisher, as he told Vanessa Bell, that "here was

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The sinuous fin de siècle

By Andrew Saint

FRANK RUSSELL (Editor)
Art Nouveau Architecture
332pp. Academy Editions. £35.
0 85670 136 X

First must come the necessary definitions, nowhere attempted in this handsome but inadequately edited book. *Art nouveau* in the English-speaking world is usually taken to mean a certain sinuousness of line and "organic" quality of decoration. These grew in about 1890 out of previous medievalizing and orientalist influences, but after a bare fifteen years in fashion the ideals of simplicity and practicality on one side, and of classical pomp on the other, joined hands to drive *art nouveau* away. Strictly speaking, the British architectural purposes of these characteristics. In France and Belgium the term conveys much the same meaning. But since there are many more buildings in the style and these often display iron used boldly and in a way consistent with the principles of Viollet-le-Duc, *art nouveau* has an equal reputation in these countries for structural and for decorative experiment.

Then we come to German and allied cultures, which speak of *Jugendstil*. This term refers both to *art nouveau* in the sense just given and to two overlapping fields of central European architecture; the geometrical and more architectonic type of composition associated with the architecture of Otto Wagner and Josef Hoffmann in Vienna, and the looser, more "expressionist" kind of style practised by Joseph Maria Olbrich and August Kundell in Germany. No hard-and-fast distinction can be made between the *art nouveau* and the *Jugendstil* houses of Wagner and Hoffmann, which sit very nicely with the earlier and more decorated part of the building. Nevertheless many of these architects who arrived at the geometrical phase were embroiled at their earlier rampant extravagance and disowned *art nouveau* entirely. This can be confusing. For instance, a friend of Mackintosh's remembered accurately that "Mackintosh didn't like *art nouveau*. He fought against these things you can see for yourself are like melted margarine" (the sentence is misquoted in this book). Yet if Mackintosh was not an *art nouveau* architect, there never was one in Britain.

Luckily, there is the genus of nationalist architectural styles and eccentricities current all over Europe at the turn of the century, ranging from Barcelona and Vienna to Vienna, London and Moscow. None of these, even the great Gaudí's extraordinary virtuoso performances in Catalonia, truly belong to the mainstream of European *art nouveau*, which had previously been international. But they are sensibly lumped in together here, all being symptoms of the great fin de siècle outbreak of architectural permissiveness. Really, perhaps the best name for the whole phenomenon is the fortuitously apt Italian phrase *Stile Liberty*.

Art Nouveau Architecture offers the reader disparate essays dealing with eleven different countries and leaves him to draw his own conclusions. (Over-Roger-Henri Guerin introduces the most interestingly chauvinistic. It has been my misfortune to read in such a book. It is best to be silent.) The eleven include three interesting but

ultimately marginal choices, Holland, Switzerland and Czechoslovakia. Hungary might have been in on the strength of a few remarkable buildings by János Fischer, but any of these four countries might have been sacrificed for an essay on Russia, the one serious omission. Buildings like Shkhatel's Yaroslav Station, his Derzhinskaya and Ryabushinsky houses, and the Moscow and Petrovskaya Flats, all in Moscow, represent perhaps the happiest fusion anywhere of nationalist romantic architecture with the decorative strain from Western Europe. Like Mussorgsky's music, these buildings are a genuinely Slavic yet subtly European.

The outstanding essay is Maurice Culot's on Belgium. This is fortunate, since arguably Belgium pioneered *art nouveau* architecture in the narrow sense. Victor Horta's Tassel House in Brussels (1893) is the normally accepted starting point. Before this there had been various decorative bairingers but nothing consistent in the line of building. Horta and his contemporaries, notably the short-lived Paul Hankar, soon developed the form of *art nouveau*, chiefly for town houses on narrow sites. For an array of these there is nothing to beat the Ixelles district of Brussels. Culot points out that although the boulevards and streets of Brussels are the Parisian manner superficially, the land on either side was not divided into great uniform blocks but into individual thin plots, rather on British lines, and that this encouraged the style. Building individual town houses in emulation of each other was of course traditional in Belgium, as the ground old mercantile houses of Bruges and Ghent attest. Perhaps the popularity of Belgian *art nouveau* owed something to the conscious or unconscious association of that habit, certainly rings a bell when Culot comments that Horta developed elaborate interior plans behind simple fronts, whereas his imitators and successors concentrated on flashy facades hiding banal interiors.

Belgian *art nouveau* fits with unusual precision within a political and social framework, as Culot is at pains to show. It had liberal, socialist and internationalist connections, and was in part a vain attempt to escape from rapidly increasing materialism as Brussels grew into a world capital. Besides his homes for the bourgeoisie Horta built the Maison du Peuple and along with Henri Van de Velde (an overrated figure, as Culot gently implies) was connected with the Belgian Workers' Party. Belgian Catholics even condemned the curves of *art nouveau* as "ludicrous"—another proof that in its northern form it was a different animal from Gaudí's work, which was nationalistic, right-wing and Catholic. Culot also comments that the development of the style in Brussels had much to do with building legislation and materials. One feature of *art nouveau* buildings, especially in the liberal use of exposed iron, both structural and decorative. And appropriately at this time Belgium led the world in the manufacture of structural ironwork.

Iron was an important constituent of *art nouveau* in France too, especially in the architecture of Hector Guimard. Thanks to his felicitous series of Paris *metro* entrances, Guimard has always been in the public eye. His achievement, which partly originated in a visit of 1894 to Belgium, dominates. François Loyet's somewhat intrusive essay at the expense of Anatole de Baudot, whose St Jean de Monmartre is one of the few buildings to combine the sinuous phase of *art nouveau* with rational objectives in construction. Loyet offers a choice of quirky if not truly original houses, notably from Nancy. Some of these are said to be in the style *bâiné*, a delightful term worthy of Osbert Lancaster. Reflecting the priorities of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, French architecture at this period boasted a high standard of public building but at a low level for the private dwelling, in direct contrast to Britain. This seems to be as true of *art nouveau* as of orthodox classicism. After the *metro* stations perhaps the most characteristic achievements of French *art nouveau* were the dashing iron department stores of Paris, the Samaritaine of Frantz Jourdain and the modestly destroyed Printemps of Paul Sébillot and René Binet.

Beaux-Arts rigidity forced *art nouveau* architects in France into a largely false posture of rebelliousness. In fact, matters of taste alone divided them from their colleagues, so that the gap between them could easily be filled. Loyet duly discusses several not-so-famous architects like Jules Lavitère who tried to extend the more elaborate forms of disdaining classicism into the field marked out by *art nouveau*. This arguably was what "Liberty Architecture" in Italy was chiefly about, leaving aside D'Arco's chunky confections for the Turin Exhibition of 1902. The same time there were architects in the various regional centres, notably Scommaria in Milan, who were intent on updating the palazzo style of their particular city with modern detail. The situation was not necessarily confusing in Italy then elsewhere, but seems so because there was no one great *art nouveau* architect whom people remember there. Goddard does his best to set his account against the "age of Ghibli" present in the Belgian case are lacking.

Goddard also contributes the piece on Austria, which reasonably concentrates upon theory. For it was in Vienna that *art nouveau* was checked and diverted along more "rational" paths, and one wants to know why. Goddard argues that the modern Otto Wagner's circle away from naturalism to abstraction stems from the thinking of aestheticians like Lipps and Riegl. This is good as far as it goes but is probably too intellectual an explanation. Some of the thinking was undoubtedly just reactive and pragmatic. In declaring ornament in the applied arts a crime, for instance, Loos was mocking both the extravagance of the Symbolists and the portentious polemic on "craft" versus the machine conducted between the Wiener Werkstätte and the Deutsche Werkbund. Meanwhile, Wagner himself had quietly shown that common sense, economy and public taste all united in leading architects away from floridity. The once important Austrian architect to reject this was Olbrich, who went to Darmstadt in 1899 and, there evolved his own proto-expressionist style. Jan Lachman's essay on Germany discusses his buildings there but is too preoccupied with biographical matters to comment on them. Lachman's essay on Germany is too preoccupied with biographical matters to comment on them. Lachman's essay on Germany is too preoccupied with biographical matters to comment on them.



The pagoda at Chanteloup, in the Loire Valley, designed by Louis-Denis Le Camus, and built in 1775-78 for Etienne-François, Duc de Choiseul. Once a minister of state, Choiseul was exiled from the court of Louis XV, and appears to have dedicated the tower to those friends who stood by him—their names are inscribed on tablets inside. The picture is taken from Oriental Architecture in the West, by Patrick Conner (200p. At the same time there were architects in the various regional centres, notably Scommaria in Milan, who were intent on updating the palazzo style of their particular city with modern detail. The situation was not necessarily confusing in Italy then elsewhere, but seems so because there was no one great *art nouveau* architect whom people remember there. Goddard does his best to set his account against the "age of Ghibli" present in the Belgian case are lacking.

Van de Velde and Wagner, are in their writing essentially rationalists. A far more convincing apologist for the decorative style was Louis Sullivan in Chicago. American *art nouveau* was never recognised as an independent entity, is covered in this book by three tiny essays. Those on Wright and the brothers Greene (Maybrook might have been a better Californian to choose) are bland, but William Chittick's piece on Sullivan is more challenging. Sullivan's obsession was that architectural ornament and indeed buildings themselves should be "organic", a word fashionable in his day and labelled by critics ever since.

It is most helpful when taken at its most literal meaning, expressive of natural form and of living matter, or consisting of separate parts bound coherently and fluidly together. In this sense, "organic" seems exactly the right epithet for *art nouveau* ornament. European or American Sullivan himself replied such ornament according to principles derived ultimately from Pugin and Ruskin, casting it in a subordinate but supporting role to the structurally important members of a building. The precision of this approach is foreign to Mackintosh's notion. Chittick notes that Sullivan's ornament is "applied" and not integral to the structure, but this makes it no less "organic" in the word's original significance.

So finally to Britain, where "organic" qualities were never purely fashionable by and large preferred their exterior plain and their interiors cut properly up into separate rooms. So little truly *art nouveau* architecture exists in this country that Tim Benton's essay is almost unavoidably limp. Much of the responsibility lies at the door of the Arts and Crafts Movement, with its unique blend of patriotism and nationalism. In the work of a few internationally-minded architects like Mackintosh, Ascham and Ballie Scott and, especially, the Scottish architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh, the *art nouveau* spirit overtook the Arts and Crafts movement, but it was restricted to a phase or a section of their output. In despair Benton takes refuge in some of the British precursors of *art nouveau*, but this

is a rather misleading tactic. Though Webb, Voysey and Leach were all respected in Europe, they would have loathed the language of *art nouveau* and, above all, its claim to be a new style. Style above all was what these architects strove to avoid and *art nouveau* was worse than a style, it was ephemeral fashion, good for nothing better than advertising.

The eye of innocence

By Anita Brookner

JEAN LEYMARIE:
Corot
175pp. Skira/Macmillan. £30.
0 333 27502 0

In photographs Corot appears as a bluffing man with a determined jaw, tired eyes, and a disillustrious mouth. In the self-portrait he painted in 1835 he looks unfinished, clumsy, in marked contrast to his elaborate velvet cap and his spotless painting overall. The point of the self-portrait is this overall, which is described in thick, matt stretches of subtle mushroom-coloured paint. Both tone and texture bring to mind Chardin, whose name is invariably pressed into service whenever Corot is under discussion. The mouth and the eyes, however, are the public man, given utterances, acts of charity, counsels of mercy, and an assumption of innocence of the ways of this world. Yet even Chardin, as he painted himself at the end of his life, has a faintly irascible appearance.

The problem with both painters is to discern the powerful professional conscience behind the self they presented to the world, a critical act which may seem indelicate to some, for the projected self is so unusually good, so angelic, that the weariness of the artist seems called for in order to dismiss it. Yet it must be admitted that both Chardin and Corot are at least as clever as the pictures they painted. No child of nature, no Vincent de Paul of painting (as Corot was called) could have composed so many striking innovations, could have established a tradition within a tradition, unless endowed with some measure of originality, fearlessness, subtlety, and supreme calculation. To investigate these qualities is not necessarily a tedious task. Yet it is one which too many art historians avoid.

Corot in particular presents a challenge, for at first sight he would appear to be the only unproblematic painter of the nineteenth century, as remote from political struggle of the artist as from the dangers and attractions of Romanticism as it is possible to be. For these very reasons—and for the apparent absence of conflict in his works—he has been rewarded by posterity with gratitude, and for these reasons the critical literature on him is extremely sparse.

The facts of his life are thin and consist mainly of the dates of his various journeys. He never married, was good to his friends and died at an appropriate age. Art historians, content with these facts and, it must be said, tranquillised by the usual hunt for clues by the very equilibrium which his pictures bestow, have in the main sought no further. Jean Leymarie's monograph, first published in 1966, is in this regard a welcome and necessary addition. Another point is that *art nouveau* was essentially an urban development associated with the growth of great cities like Brussels, Vienna and Paris. British architectural ideology was more rural, and in the small country houses which were the Edwardians' playground, display and innovation were disdained in favour of quietude of traditions and association. The love of traditions and association shines through even the bold sections of Mackintosh and Harrison. Townsend in a way, and would have baffled a radical architect or German. Indeed the early historians of modernism, never really understood it.

Corot's struggle was not with the classical tradition but with the immediate predicament of his time. Yet this vision was not arrived at by means of serendipity. Indeed

the first critical problem arises with his masters, for in their efforts to make them relevant, historians are soon led into irrelevance to the classical tradition which, strictly speaking, have nothing to do with the case. They are then faced with the multiplicity of Corot's styles, which burgeon from an early synthesis of amazing singularity and power and eventually meet up with all the main trends in French art of the second half of the nineteenth century.

It is of course the early Corot that most people know, and it is the early Corot who presents the greatest difficulty. Those calmly executed yet infernally hot scenes of Avignon or Rome, allegedly composed according to an established but in fact untraceable formula, were painted before Corot was thirty. He had fifty more years of work in front of him, yet at no time does he venture more hardily or succeed more decisively. Thus Corot scholarship faces its biggest problem at the very outset of the painter's career: the easier part comes last of all.

This problem has been dealt with in the usual way. Tradition dictates that in order to explain Corot's style it is necessary to rush forward a number of names of landscape painters who have nothing in common, with each other or with him, apart from the fact that they were all painters. There is a certain desperation in this activity, for the most cursory glance will reveal that Corot owes very little to Joseph Vernet (who painted detailed vedute of Rome and the ports of France), to David (who painted only one landscape in the whole of his career), to those shadowy characters Michelallon and Bertin, who were his official masters, to Valenciennes, the strange painter who seemed for a time to prefigure his starkly simple vision, or to his contemporaries, Géricault and Ingres.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that from early middle age onwards, Corot did in fact take into account the works of certain contemporary painters such as Rousseau and Troyon, particularly the latter, who had the work of a protected and extraordinary old age is a set of variations on motifs furnished by almost anyone from Raphael to Monet.

What is baffling about him is his reticence, both verbal and painterly, about what started him off and brought him to such rapid maturity. As M. Leymarie points out, the "View of Lausanne" of 1825 is already a mature Corot and it was painted on the way to Italy. Yet, according to one line of argument, it was only in Italy that Corot matured, ingesting the classical tradition in order to bring it back, some years later, to France and thus provide the missing link between Claude and Cézanne (names which are cited by M. Leymarie). Of all the artists invoked the most are the masters of the classical and romantic. Corot is a problem it is not to those who look at him but to those who write about him because he clearly does not belong where he has been put, and also perhaps because he was wily and secretive and so assured that he never felt the need to explain himself or to gull a credulous contemporary into popularizing his "struggle".

Corot's struggle was not with the classical tradition but with the immediate predicament of his time. Yet this vision was not arrived at by means of serendipity. Indeed

Les Nymphéas

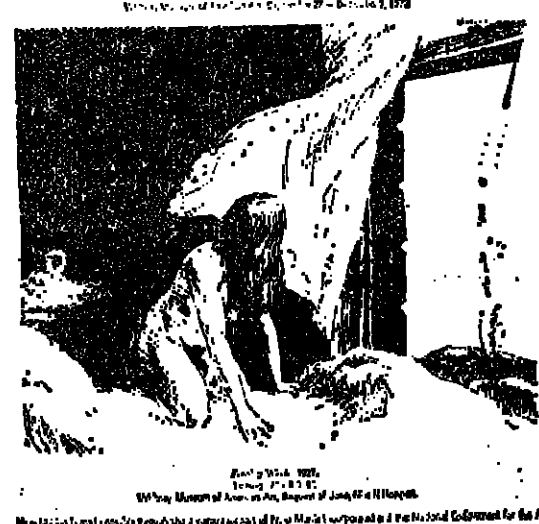
Monet in his garden by the tracks found the altered leaves floating down the ripples of the air like fragments of butterflies all about his eyes. How the trees would flare next year! He bit his lip and the drops clustered in a field of water still his sight passed understanding: what had fallen crimson as the dead at the bottom could be scumbled on canvas, could be brushed by veteran fingers into plants at home in light.

Mark Abley



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desire for the stability of the past are often all too obvious.

The mysterious equilibrium of the early works was not prolonged. The assured or typical Corot dissolves somewhere around 1855, and is replaced by a painter of fashionably misty nymphs, dancing or playing tambourines in very dim forest clearings beneath trees bending at an angle of forty-five degrees and furnished with the statuary weight of foliage. These works, designed to harmonize with the Louis-Farouk tastes of the Second Empire, can still reduce strong men to tears. A bourgeois daintiness on a fairly massive scale distinguishes these canvases from everything that went before or was to come after. The light of moon is replaced by the grey of twilight; solidity has given way to wispliness; there is an atmosphere of rising damp. These pictures of the 1850s were tremendously popular and were admired by the Emperor and his court; they may be seen as a pious and crafty interlude in the life and work of Corot. They won him a medal. It was about this time that he began to voice thoughts such as that Delacroix "is an eagle and I am but a lark singing my little song in my grey clouds".

Yet even in this period, in which he spent as much time at the opera as he did in the countryside, he was able to paint the "Church at Marisot" (1866) and the magnificent "Bridge at Montreuil" (1867), in which the lead steeple of the one and the main stone arches of the other are softened by the now curving or leaning trunks of stripped poplars; souvenirs, as he would have said, of his recent sentimentalism, an experiment markedly at odds with the unassuming rigour of his early works.

Thus the Corot of the middle period—the 1850s and 1860s—can be seen to relax comfortably into the prevailing atmosphere of rococo nostalgia. Yet he was too much of a painter and not enough of a man of the world to be satisfied with his new and limited perspective; and besides, having entered the arena of official art exhibitions he could not remain in ignorance of the efforts, sometimes subversive, of savage painters. He was to emerge from this middle phase, in which he combined the naturalistic with the artificial, and to change his style yet again, this time concentrating on his contemporaries, on the city of Paris, and on the recently dead. He gave an impression of a healthiness and sturdiness

which must have been partly assumed, for a note of melancholy, always discernible in his fiercely lonely figures—monks, nuns, children, brides—becomes deeper, merging with sturdiness popularized by other painters.

A man in armour, his eyes cast down, recalls Meissonier. A woman and a child in the clearing of a wood remind one of Renoir. A bathing nymph, after Courbet, tends her hair. Mlle Goldschmidt, called "The Lady with the Pearl" is painted in the style of the Mona Lisa. Mlle Foudras, a nun in blouse over her black working dress, her deeply shadowed eye sockets staring sombrely at the spectator, is one of Delacroix's "Femmes d'Alger". A woman half-dressed, her book in her lap, is as self-contained, as remote as an early Degas. The "Lady in Blue" of 1874, chin in pensive hand, is a version of Monet's "Camille" exhibited in the Salon of 1866. In all these works the light is muted, wintry; it is the hour before the lamps are lit. In the painter's studio, models, perhaps inspired by Vermeer (a recent rediscovery), sit listlessly before an easel. Yet outside, in nature (which at last looks like nature), the grey calm afternoon draws on and the road to Sainte-Noble gives back the reassuring image of a style as close as home, and as independent of the paintings of other artists as were those of Chardin in the eighteenth century.

There have been regular Corot exhibitions, but no retrospective since his death in 1875. There have been a number of books on him but no major study. Corot defies written analysis much as Chardin did and for the same reasons. His last words, frequently quoted, are reported to have been, "Je voudrais que vous voyiez ces immenses horizons". Perhaps he saw the human condition as sad and lonely and childlike, as his figure paintings would suggest, and managed to divorce this from the concept of nature, which always gave him relief. "Il n'y a pas assez souvent de diable au corps", complained Baudelaire, who thought that the prospect of nature should always throw one into a paroxysm of disgust. Corot's mastery, whether it arose from innocence or control, was also an unvoiced criticism of Romantic introspection. It was the nearest involvement he ever permitted himself in contemporary affairs, and, as with everything else, he kept it well hidden.

Aberdonian, Anglican, Academician

By Dennis Farr

MARCIA POINTON:
William Dyce 1806-1864. A Critical Biography.
229pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, £28.
0 19 817353 X

A notable feature of the Victorian era was the emergence of a formidable band of polymaths, one of whom, William Dyce, RA, is the subject of this eagerly awaited critical biography and catalogue raisonné. The inscription on Dyce's memorial calls him "... Royal Academician, painter, musician, scholar," and Marcia Pointon has successfully kept a balance between these varied interests, skillfully bringing out their relevance to Dyce's art and at the same time showing how they relate him to the wider intellectual context of his day.

Dyce's near contemporary, Sir Charles Eastlake, has already been brilliantly portrayed in David Robertson's *Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World*, published in 1978, and we are in general far enough removed from the period, now, to be able to see its leading men with some objectivity. The high seriousness which characterized the circle of the Prince Consort is also found in William Dyce. An ardent High Anglican, he became passionately interested in ancient church ritual and ecclesiology, and not only studied early church music but was a well-regarded composer of anthems. He engaged in theological argument with the Low Church Ruskin, who was later to become a friend and collaborator on the subject of art education and on Acland's proposals for the Oxford examinations.

Dyce was born into a family with a tradition of high academic achievement and scientific enquiry. The precocious son of a distinguished Aberdonian physician, he took his master's degree at Marischal College when still only seventeen. He abandoned medicine for theology, but changed again to study art briefly in the Royal Academy before quitting to travel to Rome, where he joined the flourishing colony of British artists in the autumn of 1825. Here, he came into contact with the German Nazarene painters, probably through Baron Bunsen, but the absence of documentary evidence and of paintings showing stylistic affinities with the Nazarenebund makes it impossible to chart the degree of influence these artists had on his formative years. Clearly, the link with Bunsen, well-known, the link with the Nazarenebund, the link with the "old Latin music" and patronage of the Nazarene painters, is of crucial importance. Dr Pointon is right to doubt the statement of artist's son, Sir John Dyce, that his father began paint-

ing in a new, purer style (ie, closer to the fifteenth-century Italian masters) in 1827, without the smallest intercourse with the Germans then in Rome and ignorant even of the existence of the new school of Purists. On the other hand, the story that the Nazarenes subscribed to buy an early Dyce Madonna on the strength of Overbeck's report in 1828 is also difficult to prove, and Waagen's account of such a picture in the Berlin Gallery in 1854 cannot now be substantiated, since the painting has been lost.

Some of Dyce's early work has survived, mainly portraits, which reveal an intelligent study of Reynolds and Lawrence with a dash of Raeburn. A particularly fine three-quarter-length of General the Hon Sir Galbraith Lowry Cole done in 1835, though more smoothly painted than a Lawrence, has much of his swagger. These portraits, however, in quality as are the landscapes of the period 1827-35, but it is very useful to have reproductions of them available in a book for the first time. An early "Madonna and Child" of c. 1838 (wrongly captioned c. 1828 in the exhibition, the next fifteen years, but sweetened and sentimentalized to a degree which hardly prepares us for the sterner devotional image painted for the Prince Consort in 1845, where the generalized landscape background seems to be derived more from the Scottish Highlands than the Alps Valley. Indeed, some contemporary criticism of Dyce's later religious work, such as "The Good Shepherd" (1859), turned on the use of British scenery instead of the appropriate Holy Land location. This demand for the kind of archaeological exactitude supplied by artists as diverse as Holman Hunt, J. R. Herbert and Frederic Leighton reflects an interesting change in taste. In Dyce's defence it may be said that he saw his Saviour as having a contemporary significance, just as his early Quattrocento exemplars had depicted scenes from the life of Christ as taking place in Tuscany.

Despite his precocious start, or even perhaps because of it, Dyce seems to have found it difficult to arrive at his mature creative expression. Only when he was forty did he paint a major work of real originality. This was the "Joash Shooting the Arrow of Deliverance" of 1844 (which was recently shown at the *Zwei Jahrhunderte englische Kunst* exhibition in the Haus der Kunst, Munich). The picture won for Dyce his Associateship of the Royal Academy the same year. He treats his heroic subject in a monumental style that reminds one of Greek antique bas-relief, an effect achieved by the limited spatial recession and the simplified, strongly modelled figure of the muscular protagonist, which is almost sculptural. Dr Pointon sees French neo-classical influences at work rather than Nazarene, and one must agree with her. At the

same time as "Joash" was on the easel, Dyce had freed himself from the troubles of the School of Design, but was about to launch into the first of his large-scale fresco paintings. William Ety's failure to please the Prince Consort over his contribution to the Buckingham Palace Garden Pavilion decorations was to provide an opening success led to further success, and Dyce was among the six artists chosen to present full-scale cartoons for the House of Lords decorations. Like many other artists before and after him, Dyce was to find working for princes and the state a mixed blessing. The commissioners for the Houses of Parliament decoration of the artists' short of money and the *beau monde* treated them as a fashionable farce-show and flocked to see them at work on the scaffolding. The artists were given the scaffolding with fresco technique and even Dyce, who was supposed to be more knowledgeable than most in this respect, had the mortification of seeing the earliest of his completed murals in the Queen's Robing Room deteriorate from the effects of smoke and poor environmental conditions during the next fifteen years. He agreed to paint several large frescoes within six years, a hopelessly impracticable assignment. No wonder he became dispirited; no wonder the work dragged and was left incomplete at his death in 1864.

Such was his zeal, however, that he undertook other commissions in fresco at All Saints, Margate Street, and designed a large stained glass window for the Duke of Northumberland's chapel at Alnwick Castle—all this despite the fact that by 1849 he was guaranteed £800 per annum for his work at Westminster. (We are not told whether his income was forfeited or reduced as a result of Dyce's failure to deliver the work on time.) There was more than a trace of arrogance in Dyce's character. It is almost as if he felt he was the only artist capable of carrying out these great works and saw himself as a latter-day Michelangelo. The subjects he chose for Westminster were taken from Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, as Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* are far from uniformly successful either as illustrations of the Christian virtues or as compositions. Scholarly in his approach to his sources, Dyce was quite prepared to exercise legitimate artistic licence in his interpretation of the story.

What do we remember Dyce by now? Not his House of Lords frescoes, nor the learnedly eclectic "Neptune" mural at Osborne, but "Joash", the musical "Page Boy" and the deeply moving "John Leland and the Blessed Virgin Mary from the Tomb" (both in the Tate Gallery). We must be grateful to Dr Pointon for revealing to us aspects of his life and work, but remains a curiously elusive artistic personality.

A revised edition of G. St G. M. Gimpert's *Charles Caldon Watts* (216pp. Faber, £12.50) has now been published. The book first appeared in 1958 and was reviewed in the TLS on April 3, 1959. The author has rewritten several new chapters in the light of the many new discoveries made in China in the past twenty years, and has expanded the bibliography. Forty-six new black and white and six new colour illustrations have also been added.

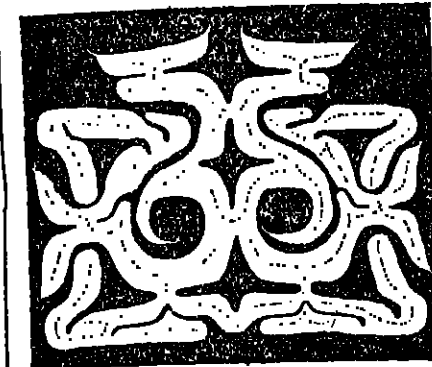
in the nineteenth century is barely touched on. Doré's crucial relationship with his wood engravers is mentioned only in passing. There is no explanation of the contrast in his style of draughtsmanship between the coarse, speeded line of his humorous sketches and the highly wrought intensity of his book illustrations. And although the author believes that the frenetic pace of his output was determined by his quest for fame rather than financial considerations, she gives no impression of Doré's relationship with publishers nor any details of his fee. A comparison with some English illustrators of the period like John Leech, who worked himself to death, would make Doré's career seem less unique and his many ways more understandable. Nor does the author illustrate Doré's aspiration to higher things. Leech and de Maistre also, though less successfully, pursued the literature they thought the only "getting on" could bring. But like Leech, Doré was hampered by lack of academic training and in all his facility, the deficiency showed. Given that this book is about an illustrator of near genius, one might have expected the publishers to have taken some care with the re-

productions. But their illustrations from *London: a Pilgrimage* do give an indication of the standard of the whole. Some are reduced to muddy greyness while others are clogged up with the heightened contrast the figures and details are obliterated. It is unfortunate that modern litho techniques do not allow for adjustments to be made in relation to the quality of the original. In *Over London*, the rows of back yards are turned into pits, and this illustration even lacks a proper caption. As for the reproduction of Nadar's photographs, scattered throughout the text, the amount of insensitive cropping and double screening is appalling.

Given that this book is about an illustrator of near genius, one might have expected the publishers to have taken some care with the re-

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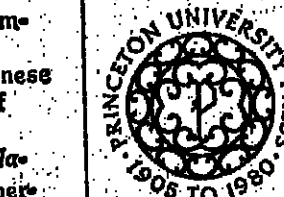
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commentary

From Camden Town to Piccadilly

By Frances Spalding

Ruskin Spear
Royal Academy

"The plastic arts are gross and dealing joyously with gross material facts," wrote Sickert. And elsewhere: "Taste is the death of a painter." On this score Ruskin Spear, in his retrospective exhibition in the Royal Academy Diploma Galleries, turns up trumps. Grossness is everywhere apparent, both in handling and in subject matter. The misuse of talent that has gone into its making can be chronologically charted in his manipulation of his evident painterly skills. Spear ends like an elderly don displaying his erudition merely to make quips at others.

The early works in this show place Ruskin Spear firmly within the tradition of painting that descends from Sickert and the Camden Town Group to the Euston Road School, and which was still widely influential in English art schools during the 1950s and early 1960s. The emphasis is primarily on tone. Drab, dingy subjects—waiting rooms, dim interiors and sober still-lives—are studied for their somber tonal harmonies. "Hammersmith Broadway," one of the few paintings in this show that achieves visual tension, is reminiscent of Sickert's "Queen's Road, Bayswater," which likewise makes an Underground sign an important compositional motif. It confirms the mood found in only a handful of these paintings, notably "River in Winter" which,

with its leaden sky, bare trees and oblique river wall, must have made a curiously withdrawn contribution to the Festival of Britain's "Sixty Paintings for '51".

If the artist in Spear looks at forgotten corners of the urban landscape, the entertainer in him uses the other way, to the world of fashion, film stars, politicians, the decorated and the overtly seen. With a journalist's eye for telling detail, he guts the public speaker, popular images of romance or holiday makers, the success story, conveying these scenes with facile flair. Mouths fascinate and repulse

him. Even his life-models (unlike to be made-up) have bright red crescents licked into position. "Dinah, is there anyone there?" mouths the lady at the piano in the brightly-spotted, shapeless dress. Beneath an enormous white hat hovers Princess Anne's regal pin, while nearby, in another painting, an obedient open-mouthed audience renders "Brightly Shone the Moon that Night" under the wand of Edward Heath. And in "Strawberry Mousse," beneath a series of wellbred curves which delineate hairstyle, eyebrows and cheeks, a large dollop of bright pink

mouse is about to slide down an open red gullet.

Frequently the flash and dazzle of Spear's paint disrupt the picture surface. In "Strawberry Mousse" the swirling impasto serves to describe the woman's costume jewelry and overblown buttons. While contributing to the glimmerous effect, it causes compositional disintegration. In "Hot Snacks" the yellow bill of the Gullman tunic intrudes so violently on the eye that the grasp of the whole becomes difficult. This one-upmanship is mostly avoided in his portraits, where an academic concern with likeness tempers Spear's bravura. Dr John Murray appears behind the edge of his desk like a dog behind a parapet. But the emphasis is still on examples, on the crispness of cut and collar, the discreetly-warded grey hair.

This retrospective reflects the recurrent shortcoming in English art: Jocular, familiar, unstretched, Spear resorts to the intellectually lightweight. In "The Cognoscenti" he laughs at the serious reception of the achievement of Picasso and others, in their post-war return to abstraction. His homage to Barnett Newman is no more than a flippancy. Only in his portrait of his colleague Carol Weight does humour turn to affection. In Spear's hands the vigorous satirical tradition of Hogarth and Rowlandson turns to milk-and-water. He modulates the society that supports the institution at which he exhibits and where he has earned popular acclaim. His painterly skills readily descend to the level of heavy-handed humor, story-telling and caricature. He raises the laugh, but leaves us unmoved, unchanged.



A Nicholas Hilliard miniature dated 1574, painted (on vellum) early in his career, when he was twenty-seven. It is to be sold at Sotheby's on March 24. The sitter is Jane Broughn, née Coningsby.

From Verona to Venice

By Stephen Pickles

A dozen important nineteenth- and twentieth-century paintings are being exhibited by Sotheby's 34-35 New Bond Street, London W1, from March 27 to April 1, before being sold in New York in May. The sale, which includes paintings by Abanado, Turner, Renoir, Manet, and Picasso (and which is being publicized with an undisciplined commercial press-release headed "Five One-Million Dollar Paintings from America"), is a significant event in the art world. It includes the last major painting by Turner still in private hands, "Rain, Steam, and Great Bridge," and the last painting by Manet still in private hands, "Olympia." The sale is being publicized with an undisciplined commercial press-release headed "Five One-Million Dollar Paintings from America".

It is night, surely, with fireworks. For support we have only to go to the play. In a letter to Mrs John Simon, Ruskin wrote of the way Turner painted eagles and fawns, "he never draws one beautiful or even pretty human face or form. I am so much the more struck with this at present that I have heard him say to do it sometimes—on pain of the parting of Romeo and Juliet." Which parting? The reader naturally asks. For Romeo is not in the picture. Of course, what Ruskin describes as Turner's "freak in painting" is the Venetian scene it is particularly difficult to identify any particular moment in the drama. But it is carnival time. The rockets, the masked crowds in the Piazza and the phosphorescent glow on the south side tell us so. It is a romantic scene, but it can only be the Capulets' masquerade. Unknowingly, perhaps, Ruskin reads the picture in terms of the couple's parting because Turner has engaged the play's atmosphere of dreams and night.

Day, in Romeo and Juliet, is a threatening reality of "envious streaks" and the Friar's "frowning night" is transformed by Juliet into "joy-performing night." "A day in night," and finally into Romeo himself, whom she sees as making "the face of heaven to smile." That all the world will be in love with night. It is a romantic scene, but it can only be the Capulets' masquerade. Unknowingly, perhaps, Ruskin reads the picture in terms of the couple's parting because Turner has engaged the play's atmosphere of dreams and night.

altered, allowing Turner a large space for the sky, the colour and hour of which confounded contemporary critics.

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which Venice may be related to the ill which England faced—Ruskin was to make a specific comparison between the two. Political commentators had drawn island and naval parallels as a warning of the historical inevitability of British decline. And, in this connection, Turner's strolling Venetians, many gathered around the bonfire in the Piazza, intriguingly recall other of his "recon" spectators: the huge crowd of Londoners gathered on the banks of the Thames, pressed together on Westminster Bridge, in "The Burning of the House of Lords and Commons, 10th October 1834".

Though unremarked, the similarities between the two pictures are striking. His treatment of Westminster Bridge prefigures on a larger scale the south side of the Piazza, and in each painting the range of stone divides the space with dynamic irregularity. The sapphire blue of the sky in the earlier moves down to become the dark yet clear waterway before San Giorgio Maggiore.

In the later, From the burlap Houses of Parliament a reflection is thrown onto the Thames which casts up in turn on the distant hills of the bridge. The same effect is found on a smaller scale in "Juliet and her Nurse", where the bonfire casts a fiery glow on the facade of Scamozzi's Procuratie Nuova.

In Ruskin's reply to the Blackwood's attack on the painting, he writes of the city's spires rising "like pyramids of pale fire from the network of the disaster joined in 1834. The Abbey towers, just visible beyond rising flames, have become illuminated eastern domes as the carnival continues and rockets streak through the air—an irony striking, though cleverly overlaid by Juliet's emotion, reveals Turner's didactic point. Ruskin wrote: "The picture can lie, and ought only to be viewed as embodied enchantment, delineated magic." But "Juliet and her Nurse" needs to be read with more care: it is an ambiguous masterpiece.

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commentary

The streets of New York, Liverpool, Islington, etc.

By Roy Foster

The Streets of London
Theatre Royal, Stratford East

It is odd to walk through the alienated wastes of Stratford's underground shopping centre and emerge amid the late-Victorian farrow of the Theatre Royal to see that rarity, a Dion Boucicault revival: from *A Clockwork Orange* to *The Streets of London*. The play is not in the genre of those Irish plays whose beautifully antiquated programmes are exhibited in the foyer; it is a workhouse of a melodrama, which carried Boucicault through his many lean times. Beginning life as *The Poor of Liverpool*, it was transmuted into *The Streets of Islington* and finally *The Streets of London*, changing its name with its venue (except in Ireland, this proper never bothered much about honour in that country).

Its success depended upon Boucicault's two recurring trump cards, contemporary references and a dramatic last-act spectacle. The plot deals with a millionaire financier's defrauding of an honest sea-captain and his family, who suffer interminable vicissitudes before being aided in their exposure of the banker by his one-time accomplice, a lovable rogue in the classic Boucicault vein called Badger. Besides conflicting love-interests and the horrors of descent down the social scale, the references are to stock-market gambling, panics on gold, and the desire of Pork Lane money to conquer the value of the shires; though there are some rather perfunctory homilies about the fellowship of the poor and the ingenuity of the undeserving rich. This message is the element most emphasized in the current production, directed by Diane Cilento and played with verve by a distinguished cast. Songs have been added to help the action, which has inevitably in the third act, and these generally declaim a more unequivocal message than Bouc-

cault would have intended; at one point a chorus number about economic exploitation practically drowns a speech far more characteristic of author and original audience, which presents the case that the real poor are the journalists, clerks and lawyers trying to keep up appearances, not the beggars sleeping on mattresses stuffed with banknotes.

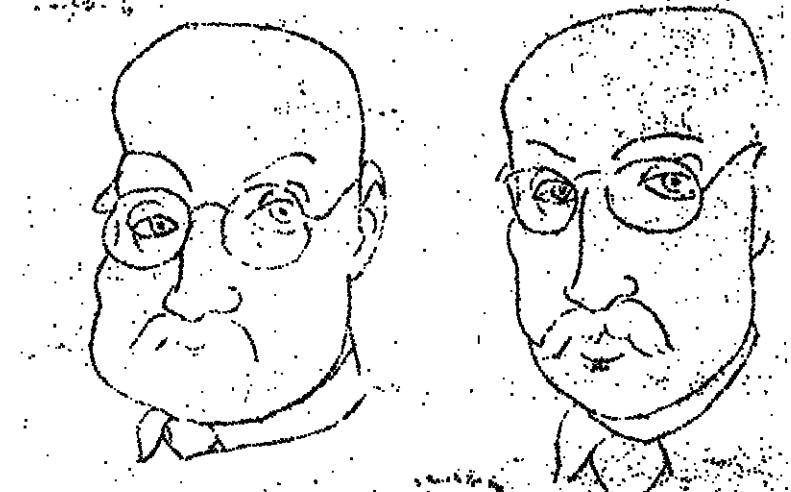
Otherwise, the tone of the piece is sustained in a way the author would have appreciated; and the acting is of a far higher standard than Boucicault would have recognized. Michael Carter's performance in a small but scintillating knockabout part, "The old financier Bloodgood is played by William Squire with brio and a stiff leg apparently borrowed from Ian McKellen's Marquis of Kebley; Michael Carter's Badger moves from camp clerk to returned Californian cowboy to penitent policeman with wit and precision.

and comes nearer achieving the necessary conspiratorial rapport with the audience than anyone else. Deaths are gasped out full in the footlights; coincidences mount; banalities are mouthed with fervent emotion. The staging is economic and clever, with black-and-white backdrops painted to resemble Doré's etchings of outcast London. Apart from some of the incidental music, in which the children's choruses tend to become ragged in both senses, the production moves with impressive smoothness (though I saw it as a preview, not the later press showing). And although the celebrated burning house in the last act creates a smoky pall which pervades the next scene in Bloodgood's drawing-room, this adds a pungent irony to his opening line, "The evidence of my crime is destroyed!"

The play, however, remains a curiosity, as it already seemed to some when it opened in 1864.

(Dickens said its success was "the most depressing instance of an utterly degrading and debasing theatrical taste that has ever come under my notice"). For aficionados of Boucicault, there may be particular poignancy in the fact that this story of financial speculation, loss and gain followed on his own bankruptcy of a year before and re-established his own fortunes; there are also (probably intentional) in-jokes in lines such as "all the big offenders go to America", an unflattering resource of the dramatist himself. Those interested in the fictional representation of high finance might notice several parallels with Trollope's *The Way We Live Now*, down to a financier with a hard-headed daughter placed on the wickerwork marriage-market. And the play's action is carefully keyed into the contemporary scene, the events ranging from 1837 to 1857, with references to stock-market bubbles, commodity dealings and bread prices, and the buying of shares in the Opera House.

But the success of the evening depends upon the ability of the piece to sustain its melodramatic effect, and this cannot quite be resuscitated: as much because of the twentieth-century audience as of the limitations of the nineteenth-century dramatic vision. The special effects of the fire on stage produce a round of applause, as they must always have done. But there is no longer the complicity between author and audience which conferred an innocent pleasure in the spectacle of the returned son being coincidentally begged from on the streets by his mother and sister, or in Bloodgood's challenge to "find the heir if you can" immediately producing the desired knock on the door. Though the cast avoid any complacent sense of self-parody, such conjunctions inevitably produce roars of ironic laughter. And when the rescued widow prettily urges the audience to extend their hands, not to the players, but to the ragged poor on the streets of London outside, it is, alas, to the same derisive reaction. The patrons of Dion Boucicault are, after all, about to speak to the world of Anthony Burgess.



Two of a group of four self-portraits by Matisse. Like the pictures on the cover of this issue, they come from *The Artist By Himself*, a collection of self-portrait drawings accompanied by extracts from the artist's journals and other autobiographical and biographical writings, edited by Joan Kinner with an introduction by David Piper (224pp, including 70 black and white plates. Granada Publishing, £9.95, 0 236 40160 2).

Art for art's sake in Peking

By W. J. F. Jenner

China
Times TV

The first time the father of a young dancer at the Peking Ballet School saw her in a performance he was amazed. The boy was prancing around on stage with his trousers, surrounded by half-dressed women. That was long ago, before the "cultural revolution", when the school was still close to its origins as a product of political considerations: alien though it may have been, Russian-style classical ballet was then seen as an essential element for the state, being created along Soviet lines. That is how it disappeared with the end of the Sino-Soviet alliance a few years later. Performed before Mao's last decade was over, before a Chinese performance of Swan Lake, such as the one on in Peking last summer by the School for Chinese Dancers' Training (Thames TV, March 19), had real meaning for it, and would have real meaning for it, and would not have to do so on one day, dancers and music were deliberately doing a job for which there can now be no justification. The programme has the ambitious members of the company, and experiences, as a whole, the Chinese revolution, a voice-over talks about the dancers' training, their "second as training Mao directly for what had happened in his last ten years, but much that it said points to him. The men became a god, and the god faded.

When empty, the rehearsal room might be anywhere, except that above the long wall-panels is a row of portraits of Mao and Lin, flanked by a Chinese army slogan in red: "BE UNITED, ALERT, SERIOUS, AND LIVELY". The dancers work at the same steps over and over again. At one point, the room, apparently deserted but for the blue-capped pianist, is filled with a lovingly-played version of "Stardust", drawn from goodness knows what corner of the memory.

It is fascinating to hear what the members of the company have to say about their experiences during the "cultural revolution", and contrasts are inescapable. Some talk about the early stages of the movement, as innocent fun, another dancer, looking older than her forty years, speaks of the pain of being singled out for worse treatment than the others during peasant labour in the countryside because she had been a star before. Some faces have been deeply marked by suffering. It would be hard to summarize the attitude of Tai A-lien, the founding mother of the school in China, who was born in the West Indies, studied dance in England, first saw her peasant country in 1940 at the age of twenty-four, and has been the leading light of the Peking Ballet School and its associated company since their foundation. Her face shows many emotions as she gives a rather orthodox account of events (in English, her first language); but one of the strongest is bewilderment at why the revolution, so full of hope in 1949, yielded such bitter fruits to her. She goes on to record as training Mao directly for what had happened in his last ten years, but much that it said points to him. The men became a god, and the god faded.

The annual conference of the Association of Art Historians opens at the University of East Anglia on March 28. The core of the meeting is a series of sessions on particular topics, some (Abstractism, Theories of Interpretation) of general interest, others (Norfolk and the North Sea) more local. As usual on such occasions, most of the sessions are well attended, and the meeting is a place between what might be conflicting or mutually illuminating interests. All the more chance, then, that the shower-rooms and the breakfast tables, and the bed-sitting rooms late at night, will be loud with exchanges of views. But will there be any time for these encounters? Quite apart from the rigours of some of the papers, John Nash on "Abstractism", John Mitchell on "Late Gothic Screen-Painting in East Anglia" and the Continental Background—there's the reception in the Sainsbury Centre, the Association Dinner and the Book Fair (displaying copies of *Thames*), the Art collection of essays originally intended to coincide with the opening of the Tate Gallery's "Abstractism" exhibition; and the latest *Art History*, the Association's journal. There are even outcrops of time for the social and the social. Hope they have nice weather for it, anyway.

There are undoubtedly many more layers of reaction to the "cultural revolution" to be examined. The school was in some respects treated rather well by the standards of the day. Although some of its members came under attack as bourgeois and revisionist, the company itself received some special favours from Jiang Qing as she tried to create her mock-proletarian revolution in the arts. Just as the pride based on staging Peking opera with piano accompaniment, she also purged ballet of bourgeois, feudal and revisionist "filth". At least some members of the school were involved—though as an institution it was not as wholehearted as its Shanghai offshoot—and they enjoyed the privileges and publicity of association with the most powerful in the land. What, one wonders, happened to Jiang's protégés? How bad was factional strife in the school? What sort of bitterness remained between the former victims and beneficiaries of what was once called Chairman Mao's revolutionary line? The words and images linger in the mind.

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Somerset Maugham intended that his biography should never be written. To that end, he was possessed at times to make himself his own correspondent and advised his friends to do the same - advice which was, predictably, ignored. Upon instructions, therefore, Maugham's literary executor, Spencer Curtis Brown, had no intention of helping Ted Morgan or releasing any copyright material to him when approached, though he agreed to read the manuscript for inaccuracies. Having gone through the first half of Morgan's book, however, Curtis Brown was struck by its objectivity and saw in it the possibility of setting the record straight once and for all. Lady Glendower, Maugham's daughter, who had hitherto declined to discuss her father with writers, shared this opinion and was both candid and fair-minded in lending her support. Morgan was thus permitted to incorporate into his already revealing book a great body of material that previously had been carefully suppressed. The result is one of the most surprising and entertaining biographies of the decade.

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Jonathan Cape

commentary

From Camden Town to Piccadilly

By Frances Spalding

Ruskin Speer
Royal Academy

"The plastic arts are gone, acts dealing joyously with gross material faces," wrote Sickert. And elsewhere: "Taste is the death of a painter." On this score Ruskin Speer, in his retrospective exhibition in the Royal Academy Diploma Galleries, turns up trumps. Grossness is everywhere apparent, both in handling and in subject matter. The misuse of talent that has gone into his making can be chronologically charted. In his manipulation of his evident painterly skills, Speer ends like an elderly don displaying his erudition merely to make quips at others.

The early works in this show place Ruskin Speer firmly within the tradition of painting that descends from Sickert and the Camden Town Group to the Euston Road School, and which was still widely influential in English art schools during the 1950s and early 1960s. The emphasis is primarily on tone. Drawn, dingy subjects, waiting rooms, dim interiors and sober still-lives are studied for their sombre tonal harmonies. "Hammersmith Broadway," one of the few paintings in this show that achieves visual tension, is reminiscent of Sickert's "Queen's Road, Daywater," which likewise makes an Underground sign an important compositional motif. It confirms the mood found in only a handful of these paintings, notably "River in Winter," which,

with its leaden sky, bare trees and oblique river wall, must have made a curiously withdrawn contribution to the Festival of Britain's "Sixty Paintings for '51".

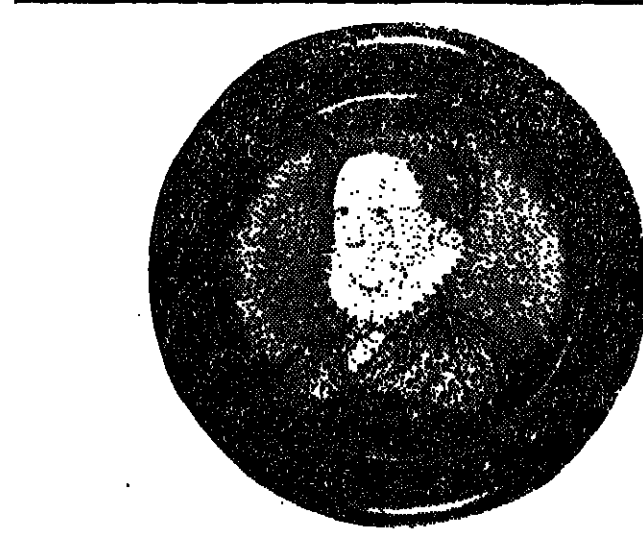
If the artist in Speer looks at forgotten corners of the urban landscape, the entertainer in him turns the other way, to the world of fashion, film stars, politicians, the decorated and the overtly seen. With a journalist's eye for telling detail, he gives the public speaker, popular images of romance or holiday makers, the success story, conveying these scenes with facile fluency. Mouths fascinate and repulse

him. Even his life-models (unlike to be made-up) have bright red crescents licked into position. "Dinah, is there anyone there?" mouths the lady at the piano in the brightly-spotted, shapeseless dress. Beneath an enormous white hat hovers Princess Anne's royal prin, while nearby, in another painting, an abedient open-mouthed audience renders "Brightly Shone the Moon that Night" under the woad of Edward Heath. And in "Strawberry Mousse," beneath a series of well-bred curves which delineate hairstyle, eyebrows and cheeks, a large dollop of bright pink

mouse is about to slide down an open red gullet.

Frequently the flash and dazzle of Speer's paint disrupt the picture surface. In "Strawberry Mousse" the swirling impasto serves to describe the woman's costume jewelry and overblown hairstyle. While contributing to the grotesque effect, it causes compositional disintegration. In "Hot Snacks" the yellow bill of the Guinness toucan intrudes so violently on the eye that a group of the whole becomes difficult. This over-emphasis is mostly avoided in his portraits, where an academic concern with likeness tempers Speer's bravura. Dr John Murray appears behind the edge of his desk like a dog behind a parapet. But the emphasis is still on essentials, on the crispness of cuff and collar, the discreetly-waved grey hair.

This retrospective reflects the recurrent shortcoming in English art: jocular, familiar, unstretched, Speer resorts to the intellectually lightweight. In "The Cognoscenti" he laughs at the serious reception of the achievement of Picasso and others in their post-war return to abstraction. His homage to Barnett Newman is no more than a sipping joke. Only in his portrait of his colleague Carol Weight does humour turn to affection. In Speer's hands the vigorous satirical tradition of Hogarth and Rowland Tinsley to milk-and-water. He mocks the society that supports the institution at which he exhibits and where he has earned popular acclaim. His painterly skills readily descend to the level of heavy-handed humour, story-telling and caricature. He raises the laugh, but leaves no unmoved, unchanged.



A Nicholas Hilliard miniature dated 1574, painted (on vellum) early in his career, when he was twenty-seven. It is to be sold at Sotheby's on March 24. The sitter is Jane Broughton, née Coningsby.

From Verona to Venice

By Stephen Pickles

A dozen important nineteenth- and twentieth-century paintings are being exhibited by Sotheby's 34-35 New Bond Street, London W1, from March 27 to April 1, before being sold in New York in May. The sale, which includes paintings by Alma Tadema, Burne-Jones, Cézanne, Renoir, Matisse and Picasso (and which is being publicized with an undisguisedly commercial press-naturally headed "The One-Million Dollar Paintings from America") following, perhaps, the frank economic lead of the Picasso exhibition in Paris entitled *Ouvres requies en paiement des droits de succession*, is of particular interest because it includes the last major painting by Turner still in private hands, "Juliet and her Nurse". The brief exhibition in London (to be followed by others in Tokyo and New York) will provide the first opportunity the British public has had to see the painting since it was first shown at the Royal Academy in 1836, the year it was painted in Venice. This article discusses the picture and its unexpected setting, takes up some of Ruskin's arguments about it, and offers a new interpretation.

In the first volume of *Modern Painters*, Ruskin tried to persuade Turner's birds-eye view of Venice as "from the roofs of the houses". Untrue this is an imagined higher prospect: he is attempting a panopticon. (We see as far as the centre of the city to the picture's middle distance.) Contemporary criticism of the painting's supposed unnaturalness might have been less vituperative had Turner, when painting, been closer to where he places his Shakespearean characters, on their balconies. We do not share their view, although they do share a narrative introduction to the picture. The question is whether they are any more than a token, excuse for it.

Certainly, Turner goes beyond the eighteenth-century panorama and its traditionally Apollonian scheme. Ruskin's decline, the intermediate parts of the city thrown higgledy-piggledy together ignores his purpose. Proportions have been slightly

altered, allowing Turner a large space for the sky, the colour and hour of which confounded contemporary critics.

It is right, surely, with fireworks. For support we have only to go to the play. In a letter to Mrs John Simon, Ruskin wrote of the way Turner painted eagles and fawns, "he never draws one beautiful or even pretty human face or form. I am so much the more struck with it at present that I see his hard tries to do it sometimes—to paint Juliet. Which painting? The reader naturally asks. For Romeo is not in the picture. Of course, what Ruskin describes as Turner's "freak in placing Juliet at Venice" makes it additionally difficult to identify any particular moment in the drama. But it is carnival time. The rockets, the masked crowds in the Piazza and the phosphorescent glow on the south side tell us so. It can only be the Capulets' masque. Unknowingly, perhaps, Ruskin reads the picture in terms of the couple's parting because Turner has engaged the play's atmosphere of dreams and night.

Day, in *Romeo and Juliet*, is a threatening reality of "envious streaks". The Friar's "frowning night" is transformed by Juliet into "love-performing night". "day in night", and finally into Romeo himself, whom she sees as making "the face of heaven to me". But all the world will be in love by night. It is a romantic commonplace, but once read into "Juliet and her Nurse" it gives the painting a more human and suggestive significance than the simple depiction of the night's revel. The picture conveys an effect of dissolution. The vertiginous prospect and vast space of St Mark's Square begin to evoke all abandoning, like Juliet's, of the mortal world. In the picture's middle distance, the sky is giving way to a sea of light, an eddying way. A huge sky allows Turner the elemental scale of his late period (which this picture opens), and with this panoramic expanse he conveys the feeling of Shakespeare's heroine.

Turner may also have "misused" the play to suggest the period of Venice's decline. In the intermediate parts of the city thrown higgledy-piggledy together ignores his purpose. Proportions have been slightly

Venice may be related to the ill-fated England faced—Ruskin was to make a specific comparison between the two. Political commentators had drawn island and naval parallels as a warning of the historical inevitability of British decline. And, in this connection, Turner's strolling Venetians, many of whom are dressed in the fashions of the Piazza, intriguingly recall other of his recent spectators: the huge crowd of Londoners gathered on the banks of the Thames, pressed together on Westminster Bridge, in "The Burning of the House of Lords and Commons, 16th October 1834".

Though unremarked, the similarities between the two pictures are striking. His treatment of Westminster Bridge prefigures on a larger scale the south side of the Piazza, and in each painting the range of stone divides the space with dynamic irregularity. The sapphire blue of the sky in the earlier moves down to become the dark yet clear waterway before San Giorgio Maggiore.

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commentary

The streets of New York, Liverpool, Islington, etc.

By Roy Foster

The Streets of London
Theatre Royal, Stratford East

It is odd to walk through the alienated wastes of Stratford's underground shopping centre and emerge amid the late-Victorian fineries of the Theatre Royal, to see that rarity, a Dion Boucicault revival: from *A Clockwork Orange* to *The Streets of London*. The play is not in the genre of those Irish epics whose beautifully aquatinted programmes are exhibited in the foyer; it is a variation on the theme of a well-bred couple with delicate hair, on the crispness of cuff and collar, the discreetly-waved grey hair.

His success depended upon Boucicault's two recurring trump cards, contemporary references and a dramatic last-act spectacle. The play dealt with a millionaire financier's defrauding of an honest seaman and his family, who suffer interminable vicissitudes before being aided in their exposure of the banker by his one-time accomplice, a noble rogue in the name of Boucicault, who called "Badger". Besides conflicting love-interests and the horrors of descent down the social scale, the references are to stock-market gambling, panics on gold, and the desire of Ark Lane money to conquer the value of the shires; though there are some rather perfunctory homilies about the fellowship of the poor and the dignity of the undeserving rich. This message is the element most emphasized in the current production, directed by Diane Clift and played with verve by a disenchanted cast. Songs have been added to help the action, which does inevitably in the third act, and these generally declaim a more unequivocal message than Boucicault's.

Art for art's sake in Peking

By W. J. F. Jenner

China
China TV

The first time the father of a young dancer at the Peking Ballet School saw his son in a performance he was appalled. The boy was prancing around on stage with his trousers, surrounded by half-nude women. That was long ago, before the "cultural revolution". The school was still close to its origins as a product of political considerations: alien though it may have been, Russian-style classical ballet was then seen as an essential element for the state being created from the ruins of the old. The school's first director, Liang Shao-chi, was a Chinese performer of Peking Opera, and he was one of the few who saw the value of ballet as a means of cultural exchange. He was also a man of vision, and he was the one who saw the value of ballet as a means of cultural exchange. He was also a man of vision, and he was the one who saw the value of ballet as a means of cultural exchange.

When empty, the rehearsal room might be anywhere, except that above the long wall-nirvana are the portraits of Mao and Hu, flanked by a Chinese army slogan in red: "BE UNITED, ALERT, SERIOUS AND LIVELY". The dancers work at the same steps over and over again. At one point the most apparently devoted but for the blue-capped pianist, is filled with a lovingly-played version of "Stardust", drawn from good memory.

It is fascinating to hear what the members of the company have to say about their experiences during the "cultural revolution", and contrasts are inescapable. Some talk about the early stages of the movement, as innocent fun. Another dancer, looking older than her forty years, speaks of the pain of being singled out for worse treatment than the others during the period of the "cultural revolution". She had been a star before. Some faces have been deeply marked by suffering. It would be hard to summarize the attitude of Tai Ai-ten, the founding mother of ballet in China, who was born in the West Indies, studied dance in England, first saw her ancestral country in 1940 at the age of twenty-four, and has been the leading light of the Peking Ballet School and its associated company since the foundation. Her face shows many emotions as she gives a rather orthodox account of events (in English, her first language), but one of the strongest is bewilderment at why the revolution, so full of hope in 1949, yielded such bitter fruits. Nobody is allowed to record or discuss Mao directly for what had happened in his last years, but much that is said points to him. The man became a god, and the god failed.

The second half of the programme, with the small theatre being

prepared for the performance of *Sun Lake* with which it culminates. By the time the curtain goes up we can feel something of the emotional charge it must have had for those involved. If many of them have taken part in cultural revolution, the revolution of the Red Detachment of Women, of which a parade-ground excerpt is put on for the camera, that only gives more force to the real thing, which is no longer the promising imitation of foreign culture, but a genuine expression of something common to all mankind. In China, where for years it was officially asserted that there could be no such thing as human (as opposed to class) nature, the unbridled romanticism of it all—music, costume, set, and dance—no longer needs justification. Above all, after tender feelings have been ruthlessly derided and crushed, the expression of romantic love has a very powerful impact.

This is in brief, a programme worth repeating. Of course, there are limits to what the outsider will make out, and to what people are prepared to say on camera. There are undoubtedly many more layers of reaction to the "cultural revolution" to be examined. The school was in some respects treated rather well by the standards of the day. Although some of its members were under attack as bourgeois and revisionist, the company itself received some special favours from Jiang Qing as she tried to create her mock-proletarian revolution in the arts. Just as she prided herself on staging Peking opera with pinto accompaniment, she also purged ballet of bourgeois, feudal and revisionist "filth". At least some members of the school were involved—though as an institution it was not as wholehearted as the Shanghai offshoot—and they enjoyed the privileges and publicity of association with the most powerful in the land. What, one wonders, happened to Jiang's protégés? How bad was factional strife in the school? What sort of bitterness remains between the former victims and beneficiaries of what was once called Chairman Mao's revolutionary line? The words and images linger in the mind.

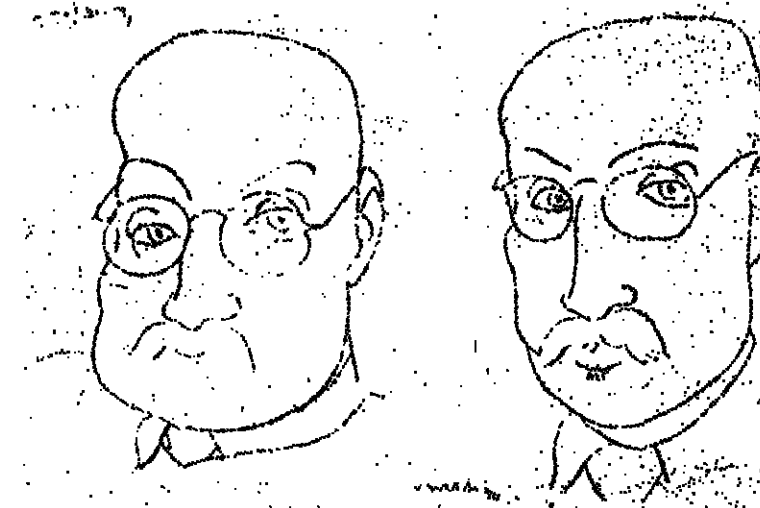
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conflict would have intended: at one point a chorus number about economic exploitation—practically drowned a speech for more characteristic of author and original audience, which presents the case that the real poor are the journalists, clerks and waiters trying to keep up appearances, not the beggars sleeping on mattresses stuffed with bunkers.

Otherwise, the tone of the piece is sustained in a way the author would have appreciated; and the acting is of a far higher standard than Boucicault would have recognized, notably Peter Lovstrom's performance in a small but scene-stealing knockabout part. The evil financier Bloodgood is played by William Squire with brio (and a stiff leg apparently borrowed from Ian McKellen's Marquis of Kesh). Michael Carter's Badger moves from camp clerk to returned Californian cowboy to penitent policeman with wit and precision.

The play, however, remains a curiosity, as it already seemed to some when it opened in 1864.

But the success of the evening depends upon the ability of the piece to sustain its melodramatic effect, and this cannot quite be resuscitated: as much because of the twentieth-century audience as of the limitations of the nineteenth-century dramatic vision. The special effects of the fire on stage produce a round of applause, as they must always have done. But there is no longer the complicity between author and audience which once served an innocent pleasure in the spectacle of the returned son being coincidentally begged from on the streets by his mother and sister, or in Bloodgood's challenge to "find the heir if you can" immediately producing the destined knock on the door. Though the cast avoid any complicitous sense of self-parody, such conjunctions inevitably produce roars of ironic laughter. And when the rescued widow prettily urges the audience to extend their hands, not to the players, but to the ragged poor on the streets of London outside, it is, alas, to the same derisive reaction. The patrons of Dion Boucicault are, after all, about to return to the world of Anthony Burgess.



Two of a group of four self-portraits by Matisse. Like the pictures on the cover of this issue, they come from The Artist by Himself, a collection of self-portrait drawings accompanied by extracts from the artist's journals and other autobiographical and biographical writings, edited by Joan Kinner with an introduction by David Piper (224pp, including 70 black and white plates, Granada Publishing, 1975, 0 236 40160 2).

Oxford University Press

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The rights of Cantuar To save the young

By Frank Barlow

The Letters of Lanfranc Archbishop of Canterbury

Edited and translated by Helen Clover and Margaret Gibson

204pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford
University Press. £16.50.
0 19 822235 1

In 1978 Margaret Gibson produced her excellent short study of the life and achievements of Lanfranc of Bec, and now she supplies a new edition of the Archbishop's letters, furnishing the introduction, translation, and notes for a text prepared by the late Helen Clover. This is the first critical edition since the fine folio containing Lanfranc's *Opera Omnia* published by the Maurist Luc d'Achery at Paris in 1648. It cannot be pretended that the prototype—the problem of combining facing Latin and English texts with a commentary is rather clumsily handled—nor has it been possible greatly to improve what was already a good text; but here are examples of the professional skills and trappings of modern scholarship, and the work is a most welcome addition to what is now a long and impressive series.

Because of the companion study, the introduction is brief and confined to essentials. Lanfranc's life, the problems he encountered as archbishop (1070-83), and the English background are summarized, and there is a first-rate section on the letter-collection, its structure and history, with a seemingly exhaustive account of the manuscripts. A useful concordance relates the letters to the *Opera Omnia* and the early schedule of the archbishop's legal actions. Is among the short tabular appendices. Since this is a collection of letters assembled probably at Canterbury during the vacancy after Lanfranc's death and never disassembled until d'Achery rearranged it, the new editor has gone back to the original scheme and printed the text as it stands in the two basic manuscripts. As to contents, this is sensible. Over the usefulness of the following narrative order there is, however, room for doubt. It is awkward that the last letter (61) is two years earlier than the first, even the second precedes the opening and the documents concerning Lanfranc's campaign for a primacy over York and the whole of Britain are given out of strict chronological order although they could have been arranged cor-

rectly. These reservations apart, there can be nothing but praise for the new edition. The Latin text is clean, the translation reads well, and—although no rendering can be perfect—the notes are active, dissent. The footnotes and especially the introductions to the individual letters are most helpful.

The letter-collection is a memorial to Lanfranc as Archbishop of Canterbury. His career as a schoolmaster and as a claustral monk and monastic administrator are not represented. In one letter (49) to some Irish bishops he declines to elucidate problems of classical scholarship, "for it does not befit a bishop's manner of life to be concerned with such things as these." Nor was he involved, at least in this collection, in the monastic cultivation of friendship which became so popular in the next generation and produced vast assemblages of stylish and often vacuous epistles. His successor at Canterbury, his former pupil Anselm, is represented by 475 letters, many of them long, in F. S. Schmitt's edition. In the twelfth century letters, when published, were often pruned of their business content in order to leave the rhetorical exercise unalloyed. Lanfranc's, however, was little more than a business correspondence, and was preserved largely for its hard content, useful evidence for the exercise of Canterbury's rights.

Accordingly these letters are an important historical source for William I's reign, and illustrate a wide variety of topics. In the forefront is the working out of the ecclesiastical settlement of 1070, directed with growing confidence by the agent chosen by the king and pope for the task. A handful of letters also illustrate the archbishop's important role in the government of the kingdom when Count Roger, whom he so greatly admired, was in Normandy. He impressed men specially with his wisdom and prudence, and many of his letters are in response to requests for advice. But he could not always in conscience provide the service demanded, for he needed to know all the circumstances and also never entirely lost the humility he had learnt as a monk at Bec. In 1070 he wrote to his successor as abbot of Caen, "I act accordingly to the advice you give from Abbot Herwin [of Bec] and Dam Anselm [then prior of Bec], for I am a sinful man who has no understanding of God's counsel, whereas both of them are, I believe, filled with the spirit of God." Operating between the poles of authority and abasement, Lanfranc hardly ever put a foot wrong.

By Joachim Whaley

GERALD STRAUSS

Luther's House of Learning
Indoctrination of the Young in the
German Reformation

390pp. Johns Hopkins University
Press. £14.
0 8018 2051 0

The history of most western countries in recent decades demonstrates the extreme difficulty faced by any government in creating an ideal educational system. The experiments of the postwar era seem to have failed, and yet the problem remains. The experience of failure has convinced more and more people that education is one of the most central and profound problems which face our society. The recognition that the events of 1968 were, indeed, still are, part of a broader social process involving not merely universities and schools, has led to a reassessment of our educational traditions. Many have come to the conclusion that it is not possible to plan accurately at all, but to speculate about the possible unexpected results of well-intentioned reforms.

Gerald Strauss's fascinating book demonstrates that the dilemma is not unprecedented in European history. It traces the history of one of the most important and comprehensive attempts at educational reform ever mounted within a single generation and shows how, after uncertain and vague beginnings, the Lutheran reformers became obsessed with the idea that man's salvation lay ultimately in the schools. This obsession was itself born of an admission of failure: preaching the new Gospel had not changed the world.

Even so, some were sceptical and felt that education was hardly worth bothering about since the end of the world was at hand. Even Luther thought that the adult generation was probably lost for good. But in the last resort no amount of pessimism or doubt could cloud the early hopes of the reformers as they set about the task of constructing an educational system capable of producing a new order of men.

The reform of the universities or the foundation of higher academies was not revolutionary. Such institutions had traditionally supplied the needs of Church and state, and the Lutheran reformers, in great demand in the early days of the Reformation as the secular state took over many of the functions of

the old Catholic Church and as the Lutheran Church struggled to provide badly needed clergy for even the most backward areas.

More exciting and original is Professor Strauss's discussion of Luther's attempt to reform and extend the lower echelons of the system. Primary schools, grammar schools and catechism schools, all were to be thoroughly reorganized. New guidelines were laid down for the behaviour of teachers who were to avoid arid grammar exercises and classroom cruelty. Learning was accompanied by good discipline and an appreciation of the rightful fear of God.

Such plans were based on surprisingly sophisticated psychological and pedagogic theories. Attitudes to children, which could often be harsh and cruel in a world which believed that Old Adam should be beaten out of the growing infant, were by no means as straightforward as we have been led to believe. Advanced, humane treatment was, it is true, limited to certain social groups. But it was precisely from these groups that the reformers emerged. The result was an often ambiguous approach to the education of the young. Extreme sensitivity to the problems and frustrations of the individual was combined with a firm belief in the value of rigorous conditioning through rote learning and habitual correction.

Drawing on the theoretical resources of a pedagogic tradition

stretching from Quintilian to Erasmus, the Lutheran reformers felt that individuals could be moulded by the constraining and directing power of habit alone. This belief, combined with dark fears about man's innate tendency to evil, led to early sixteenth-century pedagogues to suppress many of their own feelings about children in order to impose upon them a regime which was both harsh and monotonous. "The pedagogues," Strauss concludes, "thought in abstractions."

It was this which led to ultimate failure. The hopes of the 1520s and 30s had been dashed by the 1580s. The visitation reports showed Luther's successors that men had not changed. The Reformation had transformed the state, but passed the people by. Indeed, in the eyes of these sensitive humanists, the state had deteriorated. More important, more superstitious seemed to reign in the territories than ever before. This was, of course, largely a matter of perspective: the Lutheran visitors saw and were shocked by the brutalistic social conditions, but had taken for granted.

This is undoubtedly one of the most important books to have been published on the Reformation to some time. Professor Strauss combines meticulous and comprehensive research with stimulating and provocative hypotheses. His major contribution is to show how the Lutheran Reformation in early sixteenth-century Germany raises important and still unanswered questions.

The Zulus abandoned

By Kenneth Ingham

JEFF GUY

The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom
1879. The Civil War in Zululand 1879-1884.

273pp. Longman. £15.
0 582 64686 8

The century of the Zulu War in 1879, the last of the Indian "Mutiny" twenty-two years earlier, offered a number of writers the opportunity to retell tales of great adventure or, alternatively, to expose the failures of imperialism. Jeff Guy, however, in this book, does not do this. He might seem, without some justification, if the evidence he produces in this book is any criterion. According to Dr Guy, a self-sufficient Zulu kingdom was converted as a result of the war waged against it by British troops and of the ill-conceived settlements later imposed, into a society which had largely lost control of its land, its labour, and the products of both.

Dr Guy is at his best when arguing that the Zulu kingdom, in particular as its rulers, using in particular as its source material the correspondence of those staunch supporters of Africans' rights, Bishop Colenso and his daughter, For once we are not presented with "the Zulus" as a solid, black, indistinguishable mass following one named leader, be he Shaka, Dingane or Cetshwayo. Instead we are introduced to the real stuff of history, a variety of highly individual personalities and the complex, often dynamic society held together by the authority of the king, Cetshwayo.

Against this background the rivalries, rapacity and bitterness which tore Zululand apart when the British sent Cetshwayo into exile are seen as part of a comprehensible, human predicament. For the British, the Zulus, as a solid, black, indistinguishable mass following one named leader, be he Shaka, Dingane or Cetshwayo. Instead we are introduced to the real stuff of history, a variety of highly individual personalities and the complex, often dynamic society held together by the authority of the king, Cetshwayo.

only part of his former kingdom, thus bringing the two systems of administration into contact and paving the way for the intervention of the neighbouring Boers of the neighbouring South African Republic.

It is a sad story for the Zulus but it was the product not of a vigorous imperialism of Britain but of the lack of informed statesmanship on the part of British statesmen and of those of them who had any wish to resist British rule over the Zulus. Some, at least, were saddened by the Zulus' plight. But their interest led them to a very different conclusion: the views of white settlers in South Africa and the greedy white farmers of Rhodesia and the South African Republic, to seize some of the Zulus' land.

To describe this muddled process as "a prerequisite for the transition to capitalist production" is to divert the reader from the evidence in this book. But Dr Guy does tend to use the adjective "capitalist" like a weapon, a knob-knacker against those who, he considers, threatened the Zulus' status in 1879. It is as if he wished to see that order, which initially at the expense of the Zulus, was imposed on Zululand, as a necessary precondition for the rights of Cetshwayo and the Zulus. The chief appointed by the British to all the forerunners of the Zulus, as a solid, black, indistinguishable mass following one named leader, be he Shaka, Dingane or Cetshwayo. Instead we are introduced to the real stuff of history, a variety of highly individual personalities and the complex, often dynamic society held together by the authority of the king, Cetshwayo.

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May the force be with us

By A. W. B. Simpson

JOHN ALDERSON

Policing Freedom
276pp. Macdonald and Evans. £7.50.
0 7121 1815 2

Generals and politicians suffer from a compulsive need to justify themselves and ease the conditions of their retirement by the publication of memoirs; chief officers of police have, in comparison, been a reluctant body of men, although 1978 saw the publication of an important and very revealing *apologia pro vita sua*, Sir Robert Mark's *In the Office of Constable*. Though presented as an autobiographical book this was, in fact, used by Sir Robert as a vehicle for expressing the recently retired Metropolitan Commissioner's forthright and dogmatic views on a range of topics—crooked policemen, bent lawyers, civil liberties, the press, public order, race relations and even the future.

Now, a year later, John Alderson has written a book which is directly concerned with the place of policing in a Western democratic society, and which, by not adopting an autobiographical stance, has enabled him to discuss a variety of important matters without the constraints imposed by essays in self-defence. His book also differs from Sir Robert's in another important respect. In the *Office of Constable* had about it the aura of a success story: appointed to clear up the appalling Augean stables of the Metropolitan CID, Sir Robert was supposed to have rooted out the corruption. It is now unbaptized, clear that even his efforts were not enough, and in retrospect this must affect the credibility of his views on how to run and control a police

force. John Alderson is Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall, and the views he expresses are directed more generally to matters of theory, distanced somewhat from the immediate and practical problems of running the force. Perhaps further from London, down in what Rob Hope I think once called "Edward-the-Confessor-country", there is nothing obviously in need of rooting out, and more time for reflection, and plainly Mr Alderson is no believer in dramatic success stories. So far as crime is concerned, for example, it is part of his message that it is not to be judged by the statistics of offences known, it belongs in utopia.

Whatever the reason, however, this is a book of a quite different tone—throughout, the writing is reflective and undogmatic, and the solutions offered are tentative. The aim is to contribute to more thinking, writing and research on the functioning of police in the "free" society in which they now find themselves, and in which, it is clear, they do not always feel at home. At the best they can do much to ensure the continuance of such a society, at the worst they can easily contribute to its dissolution, and end up as an occupying force. This is the risk which this book faces squarely.

It does so at a particularly opportune moment. The year 1979 was, in fact, chosen as an appropriate year for publication for a historical reason—as being the 150th anniversary of the first appearance of the *Feeler*, who is now a deeply mistrusted, on the streets of London. It also happens to have coincided with a period of intense criticism of certain branches of the police service, some of it, but by no means all, coming from sections of the community deeply hostile to the police in any form, at least in society as it is currently organized.

The Ground Floor

Under the column of British Liberty we stared
along that dark oak avenue which narrowed
where the mausoleum stood—its flawless dome
still sheltering the pews and altar cloths
and buried tiers of death on death on death.

Away uphill the house itself appeared,
beyond repair. A pigeon cooed; branches
squeaked in wind; and silently we took
each other's hand to climb the fence,
and cross a slope of rain-bleached lawn

as twilight fell. No doorway but a frame
of greenish elder, and the roof beams
broken down in every room. We entered
smearing with lichen—trespassers
who thought those tall abandoned spaces

offered any past we chose: a family,
or soldiers billeted to train for France.
Then silently lay down on drifted leaves
and flakes of spongy plaster, making love
as if our tenderness could hide

how scared we were, and desolately mourned
by rooms that sidled from their casements,
beaming as they rose to circle round.
Above us, and the vanished gravel paths,
and stubborn walls they looked on as their own.

Andrew Motion

Blackboard-bound

Nicholas Tucker

EDWARD BLISHEN

Of Teachers
104pp. X.

ing to write a telling letter to the *New Statesman*: "Literary labour to appear was very much a branch of the industry: one had a sense of furnaces roaring, the clatter of large machinery, immense bangs and hisses and a general atmosphere of strong language."

The setting for *A Nest of Teachers* is a London college in mid-summer 1949 where Blishen was hurried through the emergency training scheme instituted by the government to cope with the post-war teacher shortage. Once teaching practice starts, the gap between ideas and reality in education emerges and some of the funniest and also most wistful passages in the book are on this theme. "There are detailed descriptions of 'failed' lessons—a very common phenomenon," Blishen has made his own in welcome contrast to less modest descriptions of contemporary classroom experience. There is, perhaps, a growing feel-

The predictable shrill cries of protest from organizations within the police service itself have not, to date, contributed anything useful to the discussion, and it is idle to suppose that, for example, the revelation of the scale of misconduct in the Metropolitan CID, together with the apparent impossibility in the vast majority of cases of even initiating criminal proceedings, should not give rise to widespread concern outside the police service as, in fact, it also does within.

This book accepts (and perhaps exaggerates) the contention that "Police of Western Democracies is in a crisis", and sees one aspect of this crisis to be the continual questioning of police methods and operations. I take it that proper considerations of diplomacy in a countryman may have made John Alderson reticent in expressing his self too firmly on specific incidents which have caused distrust and concern in the cities, and in dwelling in too much detail on the special problems of the Metropolitan; in any event, his thinking is strategic, not tactical. His general thesis is that the police service in general acquiesces in its habits, its style, and its practices in a more rigidly stratified and authoritarian society which no longer exists. But now an authoritarian and traditional style of

policing is not only ineffective, but can actually contribute to the generation of conflict, rather than to the maintenance of a peaceful and tolerant society.

The solution does not, he argues, lie in the pursuit of absurd goals, such as the stamping out of crime through the expenditure of more and more money on the service. This merely reinforces conservatism, and can even aggravate the problem by encouraging a technologically sophisticated style of "fire-brigade" policing, in which officers, to put it simply, keep away from the people by sitting in cars chatting to each other and occasionally interrupting the conversation of computer. What is needed instead is a redefinition of the aims of police activity, and the evolution of a new style which would reduce the isolation of the service both from the community generally, and from the various agencies concerned, though in different ways with the pursuit of similar or related aims. Mr Alderson indeed offers a draft of a new statement of police objectives, the first since 1829, in the form of an investigation, in which the investigation of criminal offences feature only as number seven in the list; and he illustrates his thesis at a practical level by reference to

The Warmoesstraat beat

By Nicolas Freeling

MAURICE PUNCH

Policing the Inner City
A Study of Amsterdam's Warmoesstraat
300pp. Macmillan. £12.
0 333 24211 4

There exists still, in the puritan conscience, a notion that it is unscientific to impart a vivid colouring to matters under serious discussion. Archaeology, say, should consist of pots; for preference, extremely dim pots; ugly, and broken as small as can be contrived. The sociologist frequently attributes virtue to length, rigidity and boredom; he feels obliged to speak a barbarous and incomprehensible jargon, and to include a great many statistics.

Maurice Punch, who is a sociologist working in Holland, does not believe any of this. The atrocious jacket of his book recognizes that his study is of a lurid phenomenon, and he himself loses no time at all in coming to the point: his opening words are "My first murder . . .". This might make the timid recoil. They can be reassured: Dr Punch is professional and un sentimental; the gore is not a mask for slovenly or vulgar work. He turns his sensational subject to advantage. Like a good policeman he writes a concrete report in a readable and tolerably terse prose.

"The Warmoesstraat" is the generic name for the police station at the heart of the old town of Amsterdam, covering the Central Station and the red-light quarter that is the city's principal tourist attraction. A mine worked by novelists; Van der Valk-land. Punch

believes, indeed, that the novelist comes closer to the truths of police work; but the novelist avoids sentimentalizing his protagonists only with difficulty. Punch chose the Warmoesstraat precinct for his study, however, in preference to a "normal" district, for a fiction-writer's reasons: its vitality and variety. This vivacious approach has strength, and also one weakness, which is that, as Punch admits, police work here is unlike police work anywhere else. His sample is thus he thought narrow, and typical and unrepresentative, and generalization. He counters this criticism, but it worries him.

Believing that "field-work" means what it says, he obtained authority to accompany street patrols. He became, to all intents a "normal" district, for a fiction-writer's reasons: its vitality and variety. This vivacious approach has strength, and also one weakness, which is that, as Punch admits, police work here is unlike police work anywhere else. His sample is thus he thought narrow, and typical and unrepresentative, and generalization. He counters this criticism, but it worries him.

A weakness about these sources is that they were all men (Punch interviewed no women, and few work in this "tough" precinct) of small education and little ambition, who asked themselves few questions about the scope of their work. He widens his sample with interviews given by higher police officers. The Dutch police hierarchy is rigid; officers have little contact with their men, even less with their own

experiments in community policing in his own area.

It is perhaps significant that he devotes so little of the book to a consideration of the relationship between policing and the criminal courts, a relationship which in more traditional police thought is seen as of predominant importance. Penal policy is hardly mentioned. Indeed, the truth is that the criminal courts, in so far as the higher judiciary who preside over them possess a general power to assist the police service to operate in an appropriate manner, have a miserable record in modern times, and have positively aided and abetted police maladministration by, for example, their failure to adapt the procedures surrounding *habeas corpus* so as to make it into an effective remedy for preventing illegal detention for questioning, and their tolerance of illegal methods for securing evidence. Mr Alderson is surely right in supposing that, in the long term, no good will come of expecting the courts to define the role and *modus operandi* of the police service; the rule of law sets outer limits only, and makes no positive contribution.

Nothing but good can come of his attempt to bring out into the open the problems which currently surround the relationship of the police and the public.

material, the street. None of the officers was on night duty and even the brigadiers (sergeants) were prevented from leading their patrols by the excess of paperwork. Too many inspectors, even commissaires, show self-satisfaction; a *laissez-faire* apathy in the face of acute problems. Punch, it might be felt, was a little too reverential towards these gentlemen.

For here is the heart of the matter. Holland provides a striking example for any discussion of criminology. Amsterdam (as Punch says) is peculiar in that its people, contrary to conventional views of the Dutch, are not law-abiding; they dislike authority, take ill to bureaucratic bullying. But Holland, in general, is an extremely stable, orderly and prosperous community, with a standard of material advancement and legislation, and a highly tolerant criminal code. The contrast between progressive thought about liberties and the atavistic howl for stringent repression born of the increase in criminal violence and disorder is striking. A gap between wish and desire that greatly worries all European police forces, as well as the legislators. Progress and regress go hand in hand; the "enforcement" agencies in a clear state of mind. Punch could have gone further into this.

Various points are touched on along the way. The author discusses, with "his" policemen, the nasty subjects of "cover-ups" and of police brutality. He understands that police work, law, and justice are like the three points of a triangle. The law is at best confused, contradictory and tendentious; "all a bit unclear really," says one policeman, underemphasizing. It has very little to do with justice, while remaining a great hindrance to police work. The good policeman, who is a rarity anywhere, must disregard the obtuse legalist if he is to see, however roughly, a little justice done. His dealings with those figures of folklore, the Amsterdam prostitutes, illustrate this very well. He needs a lot of tact, common sense and patience. To withstand both callousness and corruption, great strength of character is needed. Nine tenths of police work—as of schoolmastering—is the art of leaving alone, and few are good at it.

The author's rich experiences in the Warmoesstraat did not include crowd control or riot-squashing, which is a pity. But his imaginative insight serves him well. The novelist, to be sure, is freer, but the great trouble with the so-called "detective" is its affinity with the world of Mabel Lucie Attwell. This book illustrates the crying need for more work of the same kind to be carried out in Germany, France and Spain. Maurice Punch is much to be thanked for the absence of prejudice with which he sees Amsterdam, for his freedom of expression, and for the obvious enjoyment and ease of his relations with those Amsterdam policemen.

Seaways to wealth

By Brian Ranft

PETER PADFIELD

Tide of Empires
Decisive Naval Campaigns in the
Rise of the West
Volume 1, 1481-1654
252pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£7.95.
0 7100 0150 9

Peter Padfield is already the author of several valuable books on particular aspects of maritime history, and his work on the evolution of battle fleets and their weapons, both substantial and authoritative. He has now set himself the much more ambitious task of writing a four-volume account of the impact of naval forces on the rise and fall of those Western powers which have taken to the sea in pursuit of wealth and power. As if this aim were not daunting enough in itself, he claims additionally to give a completely new interpretation of this complex process, by stripping away the traditional, heroic and idealistic evocations of previous naval historians.

Padfield's argument is that the driving forces behind the voyages of exploration, the establishment of colonies and the opening up of the world to trade were those of envy and greed, and that the resulting wealth was acquired by the brutal use of superior naval technology. An attempt to depict the expansion of the West in terms of encounters between different cultures or religions, or as emanating

from some more laudable human impulse, is to make the basic error of confusing "surface phenomena, derived from man's urge to think well of himself and explain his criminal past in acceptable terms with the primary force of an unrelenting quest for wealth and power. Padfield's own error is to over-simplify the motivation of collective and individual behaviour, and his apparent conviction that he is saying something new shows ignorance not only of the legacy of Karl Marx and his disciples but also of one of the main trends in twentieth-century historiography: the growing emphasis on the influence of economic determinants on the course of national and international history.

There is further theorizing. States are divided into three categories: true sea powers, territorial powers and hybrids. It is admitted, after some not overuseful discussion, that historically there have been no absolute sea powers. All states of any size have been combinations of the two and can only be categorized according to which dominated in determining their policies. This qualification would seem to be insecure ground on which to found another dogma: that only true sea powers can be democracies, sea power determining democracy rather than the other way round.

The general reader, for whom the book is written, would be well advised to ignore this introductory theorizing, and concentrate on the narrative. The detailed and highly informative account of the explorations, trading voyages and naval battles by which Venice, Por-

tugal, Spain, the United Provinces and England built up their wealth and empires. It begins with the fifteenth-century voyages of discovery, pioneered by Portugal, and culminates in the Dutch war which brought the road to maritime predominance.

Good use is made of the documentary publications of the *Rijksoverheid* and *Navy Records Society*, as well as of secondary sources, Portuguese achievements in India and Asia, and the vicious Mediterranean struggle between Christian and Muslim are given as much space as the more familiar Atlantic voyages, and the ensuing challenges to the Spanish monopolies by France, Holland and England. As might be expected from Padfield's grown-up perspective, the analysis of the development of fighting ships and their weapons, especially the contrast between galley and true sailing-ship warfare, is admirably done. The battle narratives, however, are the great let-down. Lepanto and the Armada are minor actions in distant seas, are equally satisfying.

At times, the complexity of events, such as the ebb and flow of Islamic and Christian power in the Mediterranean, or the paucity of detailed evidence, for example, on the great fleet actions of the first Anglo-Dutch war, defy Padfield's gift for clear narrative. The voyages of discovery could have been clarified by the provision of more maps. In future volumes, the narrative should concentrate on the narrative. Mr Padfield will have provided a valuable addition to the general history of maritime power.

John de Wit

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twentieth century, is always come. One or two have even twin grandeur—for instance, figures of Jupiter on Q94 1250, and the seated Citharoedus on Q1297. In the similar instances one must take care. Miller's line-drawings form a remarkable and homogeneous ensemble. But ink-drawings can only achieve much. And with Q1297 the

his reasons mostly unstated. But he explicitly gives reasons for his decision. For instance, he dates the remainder of the excavations to a bird's-eye view of the Chertsey site, Q1349 to the period around A.D. 1000. This manages to include almost the whole building, not to mention the chariots, at the cost of a small area, nearly the whole central portion of the area between the last one and the spina and the front of the courtyard. Such a plan would

There is one final irony in the famous lamp in Classical Greece is that of Hero and Leucippus.

James Michie

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